

# COMMUNITY VALUES & MISSION

## COMMUNITY VALUES

There are many values held by the Blacksburg community, each reflected in the unique character of the town. Citizens have indicated their high level of satisfaction with the "quality of life" Blacksburg has to offer. Quality of life is defined by a variety of factors such as education, recreation, and natural or cultural features that are unique to a community. Quantitative information including economic indicators, vital statistics and population data, education and health figures, and other demographic data from the U.S. Bureau of the Census describes part of the quality of life of an area. The opinions and experiences of the community embody the essence of the total quality of life.

Quality of life is determined by the values of a community. In order to maintain or improve overall quality of life, these underlying community values must be maintained and respected. The following are key community values of the citizens of Blacksburg

**Small town feel/atmosphere** - Small town feel and atmosphere has consistently been ranked high by the citizens as they identify what they like most about living in Blacksburg. Like quality of life, small town feel cannot be easily quantified. The following items have been identified by citizens as contributing to Blacksburg's small town atmosphere: people are friendly and you know your neighbors; a comfortable, relaxed attitude; a feeling of security and a low crime rate; the beauty of the natural environment; the presence of good schools and public services; community festivals and fairs; a traditional, historic downtown; a feeling of high citizen commitment to the community; managed growth and development; convenient access throughout Town; a pedestrian oriented Downtown; an easy going lifestyle; an attitude of conservation and strong recycling program; pride in our history; an attractive community appearance with many flowers and gardens in both public and private spaces.



*Figure CV-1, Downtown  
Blacksburg*

**Natural surroundings and open space** - Residents place a high value on natural open spaces and the views of the surrounding undeveloped mountains. Protection of streams, natural vegetation, open spaces, and scenic views will preserve this natural beauty for the enjoyment of future generations.

**Attractive community appearance and cleanliness** - One of the characteristics of Blacksburg that residents and visitors recognize on a daily basis is the cleanliness and appearance of the town. The citizens place a high priority on beautifying their environment through landscaping, plantings in median strips, hanging baskets downtown, street sweeping, washing of downtown sidewalks, and well maintained homes and businesses.

**Open Government** - The Blacksburg community prides itself on the high level of citizen input and community involvement. Key issues facing the town are evaluated in open, public meetings. All major public meetings are televised on the town's public access television station. Town government works hard to be responsive to citizen needs and to be customer focused, as evidenced by its E-government initiatives. There are many active civic groups including the League of Women Voters, the Neighborhood Federation, and the Townscape Committee, which are active in community affairs. The town is fiscally sound as demonstrated by low taxes, a diverse revenue stream, a high bond rating, and reasonable user fees – all of these supporting high quality services.



*Figure CV-2, Blacksburg*

**Community partnerships** - Many community partnerships have developed and have had a profound effect on community activities and facilities. Town-community partnerships have contributed their resources to projects such as renewing the Lyric Theater, the Hand-In-Hand Playground, downtown streetscape improvements, and renovations and improvements to the Blacksburg branch library. Partnerships have also provided gazebos in Town parks, lights at soccer fields, and have promoted activities such as the town's Christmas Parade, the annual Steppin' Out Festival, and Fourth of July fireworks.

**Public Safety** - Citizens of Blacksburg value the safety of the community and its low crime rate. People can walk safely at night and enjoy a pleasant Downtown without "inner-city" problems. A safe living environment contributes to the overall quality of life in Blacksburg.



*Figure CV-3. Police Car*

**Quality land development** - High quality land development is demanded by Blacksburg citizens. Developments that preserve open space and natural features are more attractive to residents and help to protect natural areas for the enjoyment of future generations. In a survey on the quality of development in Town, citizens

provided opinions on what characteristics represent high quality development and what represents poor quality development. Extensive and mature landscaping was the most frequent example of high quality development in both residential and commercial areas. In residential areas citizens also prefer large areas of open space, maintenance of natural streams, recreational facilities, sidewalks, and high architectural quality. In commercial areas, the community prefers shared parking for businesses, sidewalks, street lighting, high architectural quality, limited signs, and landscaped parking areas. Characteristics that represented poor development include clearing of natural vegetation, on-street parking, too much or too little exterior lighting, large expanses of asphalt, and large dominant structures.

**Moderate cost of living** - Citizens of Blacksburg enjoy the moderate regional cost of living. The community is provided with many of the amenities of a large population center, but in an affordable small town atmosphere without “big-city” problems.

**Varied employment opportunities** -

The community places a high value on varied employment opportunities. Blacksburg and its surrounding communities provide various opportunities to work in a stable economic environment. There is also interest in attracting new industry to Town. Technology oriented, clean, non-polluting industries providing training and skilled jobs are targeted.



*Figure CV-4, Corporate Research*

**Planned growth and development** - Citizens strongly support long range planning for the future growth and development of the town. The community expects the town to anticipate and plan for future opportunities and problems. A proactive approach helps the community avoid future difficulties and prepares citizens and Town officials to develop proper solutions when problems do arise.

**Recreational opportunities** - Citizens value the variety of recreational opportunities available as illustrated by the strong citizen involvement on the Recreation Advisory Board. Both formal programs and informal recreational opportunities exist to satisfy almost everyone's needs. The town sponsors various youth and adult sports leagues as well as non-athletic recreational activities. Parks and playgrounds are scattered throughout Town, and



*Figure CV-5. Nellie's Cave Park*

surrounding areas such as Brush Mountain, the New River Trail State Park, and the Appalachian Trail provide a variety of outdoor recreational opportunities.

**A diverse community** – One of the primary reasons Blacksburg is a special place to live is the diversity of its citizens in age, nationality, religion, race, and ethnicity. The town has citizens from all over the world as the university attracts outstanding professionals and students from across the state and country, as well as abroad. This diversity is seen as a very positive element that makes Blacksburg a great place to live, work, and connect with the various cultures found around the world.

**Intellectually stimulating environment** - Blacksburg is a progressive community, in an intellectually stimulating environment. Its citizens place education and scholarly thought in high esteem. The presence of a major university also brings Blacksburg international and ethnic diversity, an attitude that is conducive to change and new ideas, a greater environmental consciousness, access to innovative technology, and a diversity of cultural activities and the arts which are not generally found in small towns. A quality public school system adds to this intellectually stimulating community.



*Figure CV-6. Burruss. Virginia*

**Sound financial management** - Citizens demand that the town sustains a sound financial condition at all times. Sound financial condition may be defined as the town's ability to pay bills, annually balance the budget, pay future costs, and provide needed and desired services. Sound financial condition requires flexibility that ensures the town is in a position to react and respond to changes in the economy and new service challenges without measurable financial stress. This also requires adherence to the best accounting and management practices, which means conformance with generally accepted accounting procedures as applied to governmental units. The town has adopted a set of financial principles that it follows. These principles require an annual balanced budget, guidelines for the funding of operating costs, guidelines for financial planning and reporting, guidelines for the operation of enterprise funds, and a recommendation that the town maintain a bond rating of A or better. A full listing of these financial principles can be found in the Town of Blacksburg Annual Budget.

**Citizen Involvement** - Citizen participation in public affairs is a key component of the Blacksburg community. The high participation rate of citizens on various authorities, boards, commissions, committees, and task forces is a strong indicator of citizen involvement. This high level of citizen participation demonstrates that

Blacksburg citizens are concerned about the community's well being and are determined to be actively involved in creating a better and stronger future. Over 300 citizens are actively involved in more than forty authorities, boards, commissions, committees, and task forces that are either appointed by Town Council or recognized by Council for their participation in Blacksburg's local government initiatives. The Downtown Advisory Group (DAG) is an example of one these committees and includes citizens, elected officials, and Town staff. The purpose of the group is to help strengthen the economic diversity, cultural integrity, and aesthetic appeal of Downtown Blacksburg. Their efforts have led to the development of a Downtown Master Plan, an economic development corporation, and improved joint planning with Virginia Tech

## **MISSION**

### **Town of Blacksburg**

The government of the Town of Blacksburg exists to promote and sustain a superior quality of life in Blacksburg. In partnership with the community, Town staff pledges to deliver cost-effective services in a personal, responsive, and innovative manner.

### *The Government of Blacksburg Values:*

- ❖ Citizens as customers, deserving the highest quality of services delivered by a local government
- ❖ Encouragement of progressive thinking through employee involvement and teamwork
- ❖ Fairness, integrity, and trust as essential qualities of ethical governance
- ❖ An open, accessible government, where citizen involvement is vital
- ❖ A community renowned for its beauty and cleanliness
- ❖ Taking pride and achieving the highest quality in all we do
- ❖ Positive liaisons with local governmental organizations
- ❖ Achievement of a positive solution to every problem
- ❖ People as our most important resource
- ❖ Responsibility and accountability
- ❖ Public safety for all citizens

Every citizen contact is an opportunity to demonstrate these values.